Some doctors and hospitals have a “no visitors” rule because of COVID-19. The State of California sent a Letter\textsuperscript{1} to hospitals and other health facilities about these rules. The Letter says that people with disabilities sometimes need to bring a support person with them to the hospital or the doctor. A copy of this letter is at the end of this document. Read on to learn about your legal rights.

Patients with Disabilities Can Have a Support Person with Them When Needed for Equal Care

• Many patients with disabilities need a support person when they are in the hospital.
  
  o Hospitals and doctors must give \textit{all} people with disabilities the “reasonable modifications” they need to get equal care.
  
  o “Reasonable modifications” are changes that disabled people need to be equal. One example is to let you have a support person with you in the hospital.
  
  o A support person can help you in different ways like:

\textsuperscript{1} Department of Public Health, All Facilities Letter 20-38.1, \textit{Visitor Limitations Guidance} (May 2, 2020) at https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHCQ/LCP/Pages/AFL-20-38.aspx
➢ talk or communicate with others.
➢ get around your room and the hospital.
➢ feel better and less worried.
➢ help you with things like eating and staying clean.

→ The support person can be your personal care attendant, a family member, a friend, or other caregiver.

The Support Person Can’t Be Sick and Must Wear a Mask

✓ Your support person must not have COVID-19 or any signs of being sick with COVID-19. The hospital or doctor is allowed to check support persons for COVID-19.

✓ Your support person must follow the rules about personal protective equipment. This is sometimes called “PPE” for short.

→ Masks and gloves are examples of personal protective equipment. Your support person must wear personal protective equipment if the hospital or doctor tells them to.

→ Your support person should bring their own mask and gloves. If your support person does not have their own, they should ask for some at the visitor check-in area.

Patients with Disabilities Can Have Video and Phone Calls, With Help and Extra Time if Needed

✓ You can have video and phone calls using phones or tablets or computers.

✓ You may need help to use a phone, computer, tablet or other device. This help could include:

→ A staff person to help you use a phone, tablet, or computer.

→ A larger screen or a videophone or something else for your disability.
→ Extra time with a computer or other device that the hospital owns and lets patients use.

Rules about Visitors Should be Public

✓ Hospitals and doctors have to tell you and your family all of their rules for visitors. The rules should talk about support persons for people with disabilities. The rules should also talk about PPE like masks or gloves.

✓ Hospital and doctors should put up signs about visitors at the building, in parking lots, and where you enter. They should post their rules online and on Facebook, Instagram, and other places. They should make sure that you can understand these rules.

WE ARE HERE TO HELP

Disability Rights California and DREDF are here to help. If you or someone you know have problems with access to your support person or making online or phone visits, please contact us.

Disability Rights California
Phone: 1-800-776-5746
Visit: https://www.disabilityrightsca.org/

Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund
Phone: (510) 644-2555
Visit: https://dredf.org/